



Pick Your Path to Health

Don't Go it Alone—Dealing with Crisis

Many women describe their lives with these words: busy; not enough time; worries about money, children, relationships, health, future-the list goes on. But most women somehow manage to juggle these things, cope with day-to-day stresses, and get on with life.

Yet, bad things happen to everyone, often unexpectedly. A child gets sick, a job disappears, a relationship falls apart-your life is in crisis.

Sometimes it is quite clear what you need to deal with unexpected problems. You need a new childcare giver or a job that pays more. But knowing what is needed and being able to obtain the necessary information, financial help, or resources to solve the crisis is the tough part. That's where you need to enlist the help of others.

The African American community is rich with resources for support. Close ties with family, friends, and the church yield enormous opportunities for help in times of need. Traditionally, African American families-including children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins-come together during difficult times, pooling resources to care for a child or offer a warm bed for a now-single mother.

When family and friends are not able to help, many communities have women's crisis centers that are well-organized and ready to offer support, rehabilitation programs, job training, and in some cases, temporary housing. These can be found in the telephone yellow pages under your local or county government listings. Another good resource is the National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-WOMAN, which provides callers with access to thousands of Federal and approved non-federal organizations and publications.

But some crises are not so clear-cut. What about being stuck in a low-paying, dead-end job; lacking resources to further an education; or needing to get back on track after some poor life choices?

While support for these dilemmas may not be so readily at hand, it is available-and sometimes within the community. African American women's organizations, such as the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, have developed mentoring and sponsorship programs to help women of color

improve their education, advance their careers, handle their finances, and empower themselves.

Many colleges and universities also have mentoring and scholarship programs directed at young African American women who have shown their eagerness to succeed. The same holds true with some companies. You can usually get information about such programs through the company's human resources department or by going online to the company's Web site.

No one, not even the rich and famous, goes through life without facing a crisis. But reaching out to others and letting them help you help yourself is the best step you can take to making life better.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For other tips on improving your health, or for more information on the Pick Your Path to Health campaign, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or visit the Web site at <http://www.4woman.gov>.